



Centre for Remote Health

- A joint centre of
- Flinders University and
 - Charles Darwin University



Defining Remote Health

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Definitions are time & place sensitive

- 'We are no longer a frontier nation, but we are still a nation with a frontier'
- Telecommunications
- Urban/rural dichotomy...continuum...more complex
- MSc in Remote Health Care (Polar Option)
- Centre for Offshore Health

Different definitional approaches

- Geographical
- Socio-demographic
- Practice- or service-focussed descriptions





Geographical - Australia

- Faulkner & French 1983
- RaRA 1990
- RRAMA 1994
- Griffith Service Access Frame 1994
- ARIA 1999
- ASGC 2002



Geographical - USA

- Bureau of the Census: Urban-Rural Classification of Areas & Population
- Office of Management & Budget: Metropolitan & Non-metropolitan Classification of Counties
- Urban Influence Codes
- Rural-Urban Continuum Codes
- Typology of primary Economic Activity
- Montana State University rurality Index



Socio-demographic

- Population density
- Indigenous proportion of population
- Socio-economic wellbeing
- Health status
- Mobility
- Availability of transport
- Etcetera



Practice focussed descriptions

1. 'Rural remote': 'rural communities about 80-400km or about 1 to 4 hours transport in good weather from a major regional hospital'
2. 'Rural isolated': 'rural communities greater than 400km or about 4 hours transport in good weather from a major regional hospital'
3. 'Isolated': communities of fewer than 10000 & >80km from a regional centre of more than 50000



Practice focussed descriptions

4. Indices - Canada

- No. GPs/doctor:population ratio
- Distance from referral centre
- Population
- Hospital
- Specialists

5. Indices - New Zealand

- Travel time for GP: office to hospital
- On call
- Ambulance services
- Travel time to nearest colleague
- Travel time to furthest patient
- GP:population ratio
- Socio-economic status
- population density



Rural Health

'Rural health is medical practice outside of urban areas where the location of practice obliges general/family practitioners to have or acquire procedure or other skills not usually required in urban practice.' (RACGP)



Rural & Remote Medicine

'Rural and Remote Medicine is the body of scientific knowledge underpinning clinical practice and medical service delivery in the rural and remote context...The rural medical practitioner provide[s] a whole-of-patient, focussed, continuing care that is responsive to the community's needs and circumstances. Rural doctors provide this wide range of services with limited and/or remote access to specialist or allied services and resources. As such, their personal aptitude is often characterised by independence, self-reliance and multi-skilling as well as strong leadership and teambuilding qualities...practitioners must be acutely aware of, and responsive to, the particular community needs, socio-cultural contexts and distinct patterns of mortality and morbidity that typify rural and remote Australia. (ACRRM)



Remote Area Nurse

'The remote area nurse (RAN) is a registered nurse whose day to day practice encompasses all or most aspects of PHC. This practice most often occurs in an isolated or geographically remote location. The RAN is responsible, either solely or as a member of a small team, for the continuous co-ordinated and comprehensive health care in that location.' (Knight 1992)



Remote Health

Remote Health is an emerging discipline with distinct sociological, historical and practice characteristics. Its practice in Australia is characterised by:

- Geographical, professional & social isolation of practitioners;
- Strong multidisciplinary approach;
- Overlapping & changing roles of team members;
- High degree of GP substitution;
- Practitioners requiring public health, emergency & extended clinical skills.



Remote Health (cont.)

These skills and health systems need to be suited to:

- Working in a cross-cultural context;
- Serving small, dispersed & highly mobile populations;
- Physical environment of climatic extremes.



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